

Darby, PA -- On Saturday, March 3, Congressman Joe Sestak, a former Fire Marshal in the Navy and a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, attended the 101st Annual Awards dinner of the Delaware County Firemen's Association of the State of Pennsylvania. The event was held at the Drexelbrook Facility located in Upper Darby Township, PA. During the event, Curt Weldon received a lifetime achievement award.

This event is the highlight of the year for the Delaware County Firemen's Association calendar. At the event, firefighters were honored with a variety of awards sponsored by the association. They honored individuals who have completed 50 years of service to the association as well as having an outside speaker, Dr. Harry Carter, an internally-known municipal fire protection consultant, author, lecturer, and veteran fire officer.

"In the Navy I learned: duty, honor, courage," noted Joe. "Those values served me well in my first position as a Fire Marshal in the Navy and I came to see then, what I continue to value now - the selfless commitment of so many first-responders here at home.

"Without a doubt, one of the greatest services in my district comes from first responders who are on the frontlines protecting us. They are required to balance the demands of their service with their families and full-time careers. That is why I am pleased to join so many Delaware County firefighters at tonight's 101st Annual Awards dinner."

On Thursday, February 15, Joe announced that he is cosponsoring bipartisan legislation to provide tax relief for volunteer first responders.

The legislation, the Volunteer Firefighter's Tax Incentive Protection Act (H.R. 943), amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow state and local government the flexibility to develop beneficial tax incentives for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel without federal interference. This sensible approach helps to ensure that state and local governments can design and implement programs for encouraging recruitment and retention that directly reflect the needs of their volunteers. Rather than specifying which programs or incentives are eligible for tax exemption, the bill covers benefits "provided by a State or political subdivision on account of services performed as a member of a qualified volunteer emergency response organization."

In addition to covering property tax abatements, the bill also covers retirement awards, death

benefits, health benefits, and state income tax credits, in addition to other incentives that some states are considering such as stipends paid per call or stipends paid in lump-sums per quarter or year. Joe hopes that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and local municipalities will continue to work to provide their volunteer emergency responders with the appropriate incentives, rewarding them for the first-class service they offer the citizens of Pennsylvania. Joe plans to visit all the fire and police stations in the district. He has already visited Ridley Park Fire Co. 1, Radnor Fire Co., Swarthmore Fire Co., Folsom Fire Co., and Cardington-Stonehurst Fire Company.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

###